Reconstruction DBQ

How successful was the attempt to reconstruct the South after the Civil War?

1. Read all of the provided documents.

2. Fill in the Reconstruction DBQ Essay Outline.

3. Document Based Question: To what extent was the Reconstruction of the South successful?

DOCUMENT A

Amendment 13:
Neither slavery nor involuntary servitude, except as punishment for crime whereof the party shall have been duly convicted, shall exist within the United States, or and place subject to their jurisdiction.... 1865

Amendment 14:
All persons born or naturalized in the United States, and subject to the jurisdiction thereof, are citizens of the United States and of the State wherein they reside. No state shall make or enforce any law which shall abridge the privileges or immunities of citizens of the United States; nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law; nor deny to any person within its jurisdiction the equal protection of the laws....1868

Amendment 15:
The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous conditions of servitude.......1870

SOURCE: U. S. Constitution.

DOCUMENT B

Source: The example below of “Black Codes” comes from laws passed in Opelousas, LA immediately after the Civil War.

1. "No negro or freedmen shall be allowed to come within the limits of the town of Opelousas without special permission from his employers. Whoever breaks this law will go to jail and work for two days on the public streets, or pay a fine of five dollars."

2. “No negro or freedman shall be permitted to rent or keep a house in town under any circumstances. No negro or freedman shall live within the town who does not work for some white person or former owner.”

3. “No public meetings of negroes or freedmen shall be allowed within the town.”

4. “No freedman shall be allowed to carry firearms, or any kind of weapons. No freedman shall sell or exchange any article of merchandise within the limits of Opelousas without permission in writing from his employer.”

5. “Every negro is to be in the service of (work for) some white person, or former owner.”
DOCUMENT C

Source: Albion Tourgee, Letter on Ku Klux Klan Activities. New York Tribune, May 1870. Note: Tourgee was a white, Northern soldier who settled in North Carolina after the War. He served as a judge during Reconstruction and wrote this letter to the North Carolina Republican Senator, Joseph Carter Abbott.

It is my mournful duty to inform you that our friend John W. Stephens, State Senator from Caswell, is dead. He was foully murdered by the Ku-Klux in the Grand Jury room of the Court House on Saturday… He was stabbed five or six times, and then hanged on a hook in the Grand Jury room… Another brave, honest Republican citizen has met his fate at the hands of these fiends…

I have very little doubt that I shall be one of the next victims. My steps have been dogged for months, and only a good opportunity has been wanting to secure to me the fate which Stephens has just met… I say to you plainly that any member of Congress who, especially if from the South, does not support, advocate, and urge immediate, active, and thorough measures to put an end to these outrages…is a coward, a traitor, or a fool.

DOCUMENT D

Source: Harper’s Weekly, October 21, 1876.

Caption: “Of Course he wants to vote the Democratic ticket.”
DOCUMENT E

Source: Abram Colby, testimony to a joint House and Senate Committee in 1872.

Note: Colby was a former slave who was elected to the Georgia State legislature during Reconstruction.

Colby: On the 29th of October 1869, [the Klansmen] broke my door open, took me out of bed, took me to the woods and whipped me three hours or more and left me for dead. They said to me, "Do you think you will ever vote another damned Radical ticket?" I said, "If there was an election tomorrow, I would vote the Radical ticket." They set in and whipped me a thousand licks more, with sticks and straps that had buckles on the ends of them.

Question: What is the character of those men who were engaged in whipping you?

Colby: Some are first-class men in our town. One is a lawyer, one a doctor, and some are farmers… They said I had voted for Grant and had carried the Negroes against them. About two days before they whipped me they offered me $5,000 to go with them and said they would pay me $2,500 in cash if I would let another man go to the legislature in my place. I told them that I would not do it if they would give me all the county was worth… No man can make a free speech in my county. I do not believe it can be done anywhere in Georgia.

DOCUMENT F

Northern artist’s portrayal of the South Carolina State Legislature during Reconstruction.

Source: The Cover of Harper’s Weekly, March 14, 1874
DOCUMENT G

General:

We want Homesteads; we were promised Homesteads by the government. If it does not carry out the promises its agents made to us,…we are left in a more unpleasant condition than our former. We are at the mercy of those who are combined to prevent us from getting land enough to lay our Fathers bones upon…

To the President of these United States:

Shall not we who are freedmen and have been always true to this Union have the same rights as are enjoyed by others?... Are not our rights as a free people and good citizens of these United States to be considered before the rights of those who were found in rebellion against this good and just government (and now being conquered) come (as they seem) with penitent hearts and beg forgiveness for past offenses and also ask if their [sic] lands cannot be restored to them. Are these rebellious spirits to be reinstated in their [sic] possessions and we who have been abused and oppressed for many long years not be allowed the privilege of purchasing land but be subject to the will of these large land owners? God forbid…

Unless some provision is made our future is sad to look upon…We therefore look to you in this trying hour as a true friend of the poor and neglected race, for protection and equal rights, with the privilege of purchasing a homestead- a homestead right here in the heart of South Carolina.

The Freedmen of Edisto Island Petition to the Commissioner of the Freedmen’s Bureau and to the President for the Opportunity to Obtain Their Own Land, Edisto Island, S.C. October 1865.

Document H

Thomas Nast in Harper’s Weekly, October 24, 1874.